

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 127540  
ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

66011

DRAFTED BY: IO/UNA:BJSHARP

APPROVED BY: IO/UNA:JFTEFFT

S/S-O:KDSCOTT

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O 190130Z MAY 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0000

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 127540

EXDIS FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 6403 SENT ACTION SECSTATE, INFO  
WHITE HOUSE 18 MAY 78

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6403

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, MASS, IS, US, PEBR

SUBJECT: LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO PRIME MINISTER BEGIN CONCERN-

ING AIRCRAFT SALE

REF: (A) STATE 125076, (B) STATE 123877

1. MET WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AT HIS RESIDENCE IN  
JERUSALEM AT 1700 HOURS MAY 17 AND DELIVERED THE PRESIDENT'S  
LETTER. HE READ IT CAREFULLY, WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED BY  
TEXT AND TONE, PROMISED TO REPLY IN NEAR FUTURE, AND  
ASKED ME TO EXPRESS TO THE PRESIDENT HIS GRATITUDE FOR  
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THE "VERY WARM AND THOUGHTFUL LETTER HE HAD SENT."

2. BEGIN THEN SAID THAT HE FELT NONETHELESS IT WAS  
HIS DUTY, EVEN AFTER THE FACT, TO EXPLAIN AGAIN HIS  
CONCERNS ABOUT THE ARMS PACKAGE DECISION. HE SAID  
THAT THE CABINET WOULD BE DISCUSSING THE IMPLICATIONS  
OF THE DECISIONS ON SUNDAY, MAY 21, AND WOULD "MAKE

ITS DECISION THEN", SINCE HE EXPECTED THERE WOULD BE DIFFERENCES OF VIEW IN THE CABINET, AND HIS FOREIGN MINISTER HAD BEEN AWAY FOR SOME DAYS, HE COULD GIVE ME NO INDICATION AT THIS POINT AS TO WHAT THAT DECISION MIGHT BE. BUT HE SAID HE WANTED TO EXPLAIN AGAIN WHY ALL THE ISRAELI PUBLIC WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION.

3. FIRST, HE SAID, THE US COMMITMENT TO SUPPLY F-16S TO ISRAEL WAS IN HIS READING "COMPLETELY UNCONDITIONAL"; YET THE ADMINISTRATION HAD PUT IT FORWARD IN A WAY IN WHICH IT WAS CONDITIONED TO APPROVAL OF THE ARAB SALES PROPOSALS. SECOND, THE CONCERNS CENTERED ABOUT THE F-15 ITSELF-THE MOST SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEM OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD, AGAINST WHOSE EVENTUAL USE AGAINST ISRAEL AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE THERE COULD BE NO REAL GUARANTEE. AND THIRD, WITH REGARD TO THE EGYPTIAN SALE, THE DECISION WOULD CERTAINLY FURTHER HARDEN SADAT'S NEGOTIATING POSITION ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE BEYOND THE ALREADY VERY HARD UNYIELDING POSITION HE HAD ASSUMED. FOR ALL OF THESE REASONS, BEGIN SAID, HE COULD NOT CONCEAL FROM ME THE GREAT DEPTH OF WORRY AND SADNESS ENGENDERED THROUGHOUT ISRAEL BY THIS OUTCOME.

4. BEGIN'S WHOLE Demeanor THROUGHOUT THIS CONVERSATION  
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WAS ONE OF GREAT FATIGUE AND DEPRESSION. HE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY SHOWING THE SIGNS OF THE SHARP ATTACKS FROM THE OPPOSITION YESTERDAY AND TODAY IN THE KNESSET AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT'S MISHANDLING OF THE ARMS SALE QUESTION. BEYOND THAT, THERE WAS SEEMINGLY A CONSIDERABLE RESIGNATION AND BAFFLEMENT AS TO WHAT THE FUTURE PORTENDED.

5. BEGIN ASKED ME AT THIS POINT IN THE CONVERSATION WHETHER I KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT IN THE ARMS AREA. WHEN I REFERRED TO THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE SENATE TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL F-15S FOR ISRAEL HE SEEMS FUNDAMENTALLY UNAWARE THAT ANY SUCH COMMITMENT HAD BEEN GIVEN, AT LEAST IN WRITING. I SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD WRITTEN A LETTER CONTAINING THIS COMMITMENT TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, AND THAT I PRESUMED THIS LETTER HAD BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO THE ISRAELI EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. HE SAID THAT THEY HAD NOT SEEN ANY SUCH LETTER, SO I PROMISED TO PROVIDE HIM WITH A TEXT BEFORE THE CABINET MEETING ON SUNDAY. (WILL PROVIDE TEXT FROM WIRELESS FILE OF MAY 11).

6. AS WE TALKED ABOUT THE CABINET'S IMPENDING DISCUSSION, I URGED THAT HE TRY TO PALCE THIS INCIDENT IN PROPER PERSPECITVE AND TO PUT IT BEHIND US SO AS NOT TO DIVERT ENERGY OR ATTENTION FROM THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF RENEWING MOMENTUM IN THE PEACE PROCESS. FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS IN PARA 2 OF REF B, I STRESSED OUR CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO WORK CLOSELY WITH ISRAEL TOWARD OUR COMMON OBJECTIVE OF PEACE WITH SECURITY, AND UNDERScoreD THE ENDURING NATURE OF THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE US AND ISRAEL. BEGIN SAID AGAIN THAT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO PUT ASIDE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ARMS DECISION SINCE THE WHOLE ISRAELI PEOPLE WAS EXTREMELY CONFIDENTIAL

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WORKED UP ABOUT IT. I SUGGESTED THAT HIS OWN PUBLIC REACTIONS WOULD HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO DO WITH GUIDING PUBLIC OPINION TO HELP PUT THIS AFFAIR INTO PROPER PERSPECTIVE, AND I URGED HIM TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO SEE THAT THIS OCCURRED. HE DID NOT ARGUE MY POINT, BUT CONCLUDED OUR CONVERSATION BY SAYING AGAIN, HOWEVER, THAT MUCH DEPENDED ON HOW THE ISSUE WAS DEBATED IN THE CABINET ON SUNDAY. I SENSED HIS EXPECTATION THAT THERE WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE RECRIMINATION AMONG VAROUS CABINET MINISTERS WHICH WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO CLOSE RANKS BEHIND ANY MODERATE PUBLIC POSITION. LEWIS

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 19 may 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**TAGS:** PARM, MASS, PEPR, PPDC, IS, US, (CARTER, JIMMY), (LEWIS, SAMUEL W), (BEGIN, MENACHEM)  
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